



No. 197

The Rainbow Prince



TWO FOLK TALES FROM BENGAL

Children love to hear stories—so do adults, if the story has relevance to their lives. It is this love which has kept alive for generations stories that have been handed down by an oral tradition.

Every time a story is retold it acquires a new colour and a new dimension. The grandmother who heard a story as a little girl from her grandmother will relish telling it to her grandchildren. A traveller from a distant land, who happens to hear a story during his journey, will later tell it to his own people, modifying it or adding to it little details to suit the change of place and context. This is how stories travel from one part of the world to another and why some stories of Aesop and Vishnu Sharma who wrote the Panchatantra, have much in common.

This Amar Chitra Katha retells two folk tales popular in Bengal.

**AMAR CHITRA KATHA means good reading.
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THE RAINBOW PRINCE



PRINCESS RUPANJALI WAS BEAUTIFUL TO BEHOLD AND HER LAUGHTER WAS LIKE THE BABBLING BROOK.

BUT HER MOTHER, THE QUEEN, WAS WORRIED.

WHERE WILL WE FIND A PRINCE GOOD ENOUGH FOR OUR DARLING DAUGHTER?

MY BARDS WILL FIND HER A HANDSOME PRINCE.

SO THE BARDS WERE SENT TO KINGDOMS NEAR AND FAR IN SEARCH OF A MATCH FOR THEIR PRINCESS. WHEN THEY RETURNED —



YOUR MAJESTY, WE HAVE BROUGHT PORTRAITS OF THE MOST HANDSOME OF THE PRINCES WE SAW. LET THE PRINCESS CHOOSE FROM THEM.

THE PICTURES WERE HUNG UP IN THE PALACE ART GALLERY AND THE KING AND QUEEN TOOK RUPANJALI THERE.

WE LEAVE THE CHOICE TO YOU, RUPANJALI. TELL US WHO AMONG THESE PRINCES YOU WISH TO MARRY.



RUPANJALI WALKED AROUND THE GALLERY.



WELL ? WHICH ONE DO YOU LIKE THE MOST ?

NONE ! NOT ONE OF THEM IS WORTHY OF MY HAND.



THEN RUPANJALI POINTED TO THE SKY.

THE PRINCE I MARRY SHOULD BE AS HANDSOME AS THE RAINBOW.



THE NEXT MORNING A STRANGER APPEARED IN THE CITY.



HOW
EXQUISITE
HIS MUSIC
IS!

WHERE
IS HE
FROM?

THE STRANGER WENT STRAIGHT
TO THE PALACE.



O KING, I COME
FROM THE LAND
OF THE RAINBOW.
I HAVE BEEN LOOK-
ING FOR A BRIDE
WORTHY OF OUR
PRINCE. I HAVE JUST
HEARD OF PRINCESS
RUPANJALI AND HAVE
COME WITH A MAR-
RIAGE PROPOSAL.

THE KING GOT UP FROM HIS THRONE
TO GREET THE STRANGER.



MY HEARTIEST WEL-
COME TO YOU. THIS IS
INDEED A FORTUNATE
DAY FOR MY DAUGHTER.
I AM HAPPY TO ACCEPT
YOUR OFFER.

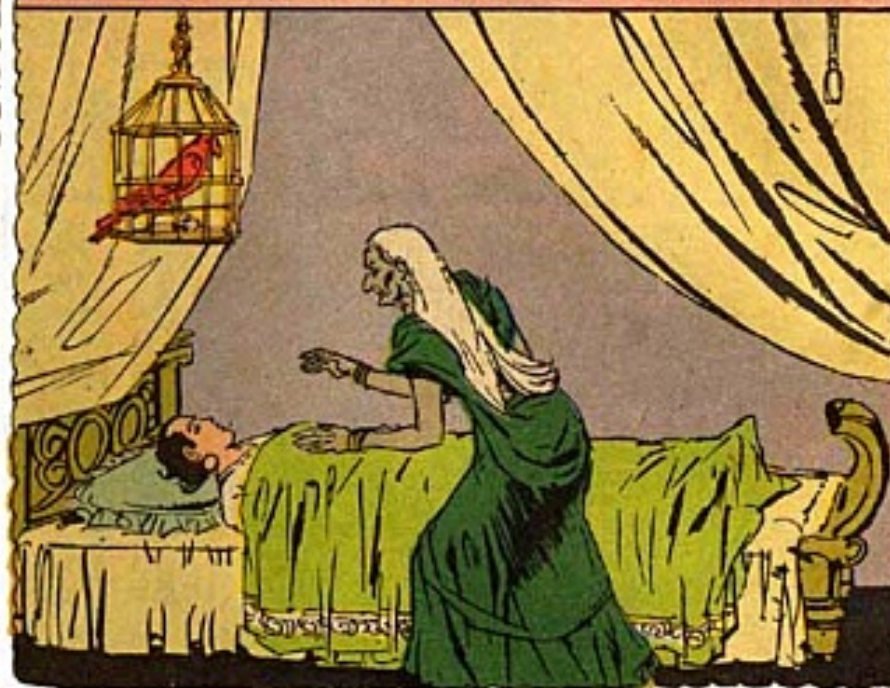
WAIT! BEFORE YOU
DO, THERE IS ONE THING
I MUST TELL YOU. SOME
TIME AGO . . .



"... A WICKED OLD WITCH CAME
TO OUR LAND . . ."



"... AND CAST A SPELL ON OUR PRINCE
WHICH PUT HIM TO SLEEP FOR A LONG TIME."



" THEN SHE BREATHED THE CONSCIOUS-
NESS OF THE PRINCE INTO A BLOOD-
RED PARROT . . . "



"... AND LET THE BIRD FLY AWAY."



OUR PRINCE WILL NOT AWAKE UNTIL THE RED PARROT IS FOUND.



THE KING WAS DISMAYED.

HOW CAN I MARRY MY ONLY DAUGHTER TO A PRINCE WHO MAY NEVER WAKE UP AGAIN?



WHEN THE NEWS REACHED RUPANJALI, HOWEVER —

I WILL MARRY NO ONE BUT THE RAINBOW PRINCE. AND HE MUST BE AROUSED FROM HIS SLEEP. SO I MUST HAVE THE RED PARROT.



BUT, MY CHILD, WE DO NOT KNOW WHERE IT HAS FLOWN AWAY.

RUPANJALI STAMPED HER FOOT IMPATIENTLY.



EVERY SINGLE BIRD IN THE KINGDOM MUST BE CAUGHT. YOU ARE CERTAIN TO FIND THE RED PARROT AMONG THEM.

THE KING WAS SHOCKED.

BUT WE CAN'T DO THAT, CHILD. IT WOULD BE CRUEL.

I DON'T CARE. IF YOU LOVE ME, FATHER, YOU WILL DO IT.

AND REMEMBER — NOT A SINGLE BIRD SHOULD ESCAPE.

ALL RIGHT, MY CHILD.

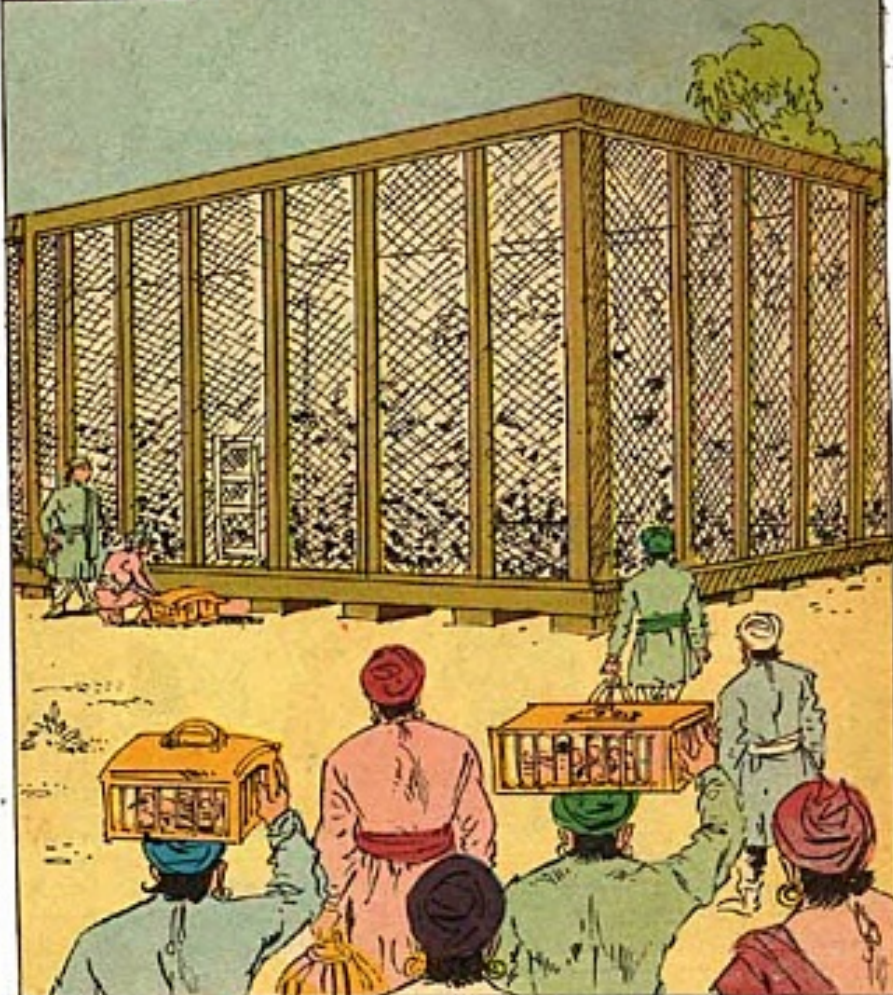
THE NEXT DAY, ORDERS WERE SENT OUT FOR ALL BIRDS TO BE TRAPPED.

SOON THE NESTS BECAME EMPTY.

THE HAPPY CHIRPING OF BIRDS
NO LONGER FILLED THE AIR.

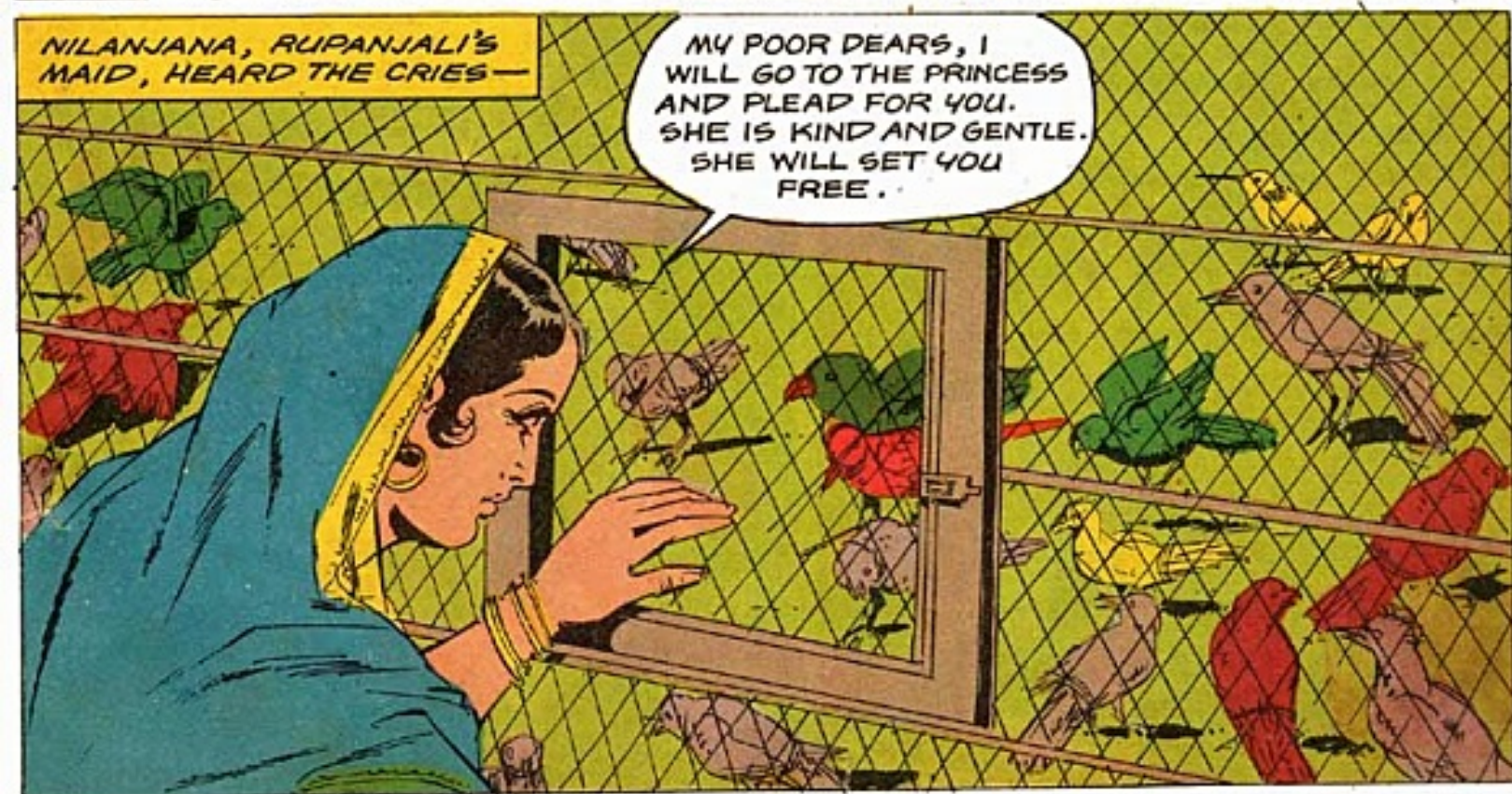


A SPECIAL CAGE WAS ERECTED FOR THE
BIRDS. THERE WERE MILLIONS OF THEM.
THE ENTIRE CAGE ECHOED AND RE-ECHOED
WITH THEIR HEARTBROKEN, FRIGHTENED
CRIES.



NILANJANA, RUPANJALI'S
MAID, HEARD THE CRIES—

MY POOR DEARS, I
WILL GO TO THE PRINCESS
AND PLEAD FOR YOU.
SHE IS KIND AND GENTLE.
SHE WILL GET YOU
FREE.



NILANJANA WENT TO THE PRINCESS TO PLEAD FOR THE BIRDS.

OH KIND PRINCESS, SET THE POOR BIRDS FREE! DON'T YOU SEE HOW WRETCHED THEY ARE?



RUPANJALI FLEW INTO A RAGE.

HOW DARE YOU QUESTION MY ACTIONS, YOU WRETCH!



NILANJANA WAS SHOCKED TO SEE THE CHANGE THAT HAD COME OVER HER PRINCESS.

THIS IS NOT THE PRINCESS I ADMIRER! THIS IS NOT THE GENTLE RUPANJALI WHOSE SMILE HELD THE COLOURS OF THE RAINBOW.



NILANJANA TRIED AGAIN.

DEAR PRINCESS, HOW CAN YOU FIND YOUR LIFE'S HAPPINESS AT THE COST OF SUCH PAIN TO THE POOR CREATURES? SET THEM FREE.



RUPANJALI'S EYES FLASHED DANGEROUSLY.

WELL-SPOKEN,
MERCIFUL ONE!
YOU LOVE THOSE
BIRDS, DON'T
YOU?

YES,
PRINCESS.
MY HEART
GOES OUT
TO THEM.

RUPANJALI TURNED TO THE GUARDS.

THROW HER INTO THE
CAGE. LET HER BE IN THE
COMPANY OF THE BIRDS
SHE LOVES
SO MUCH!

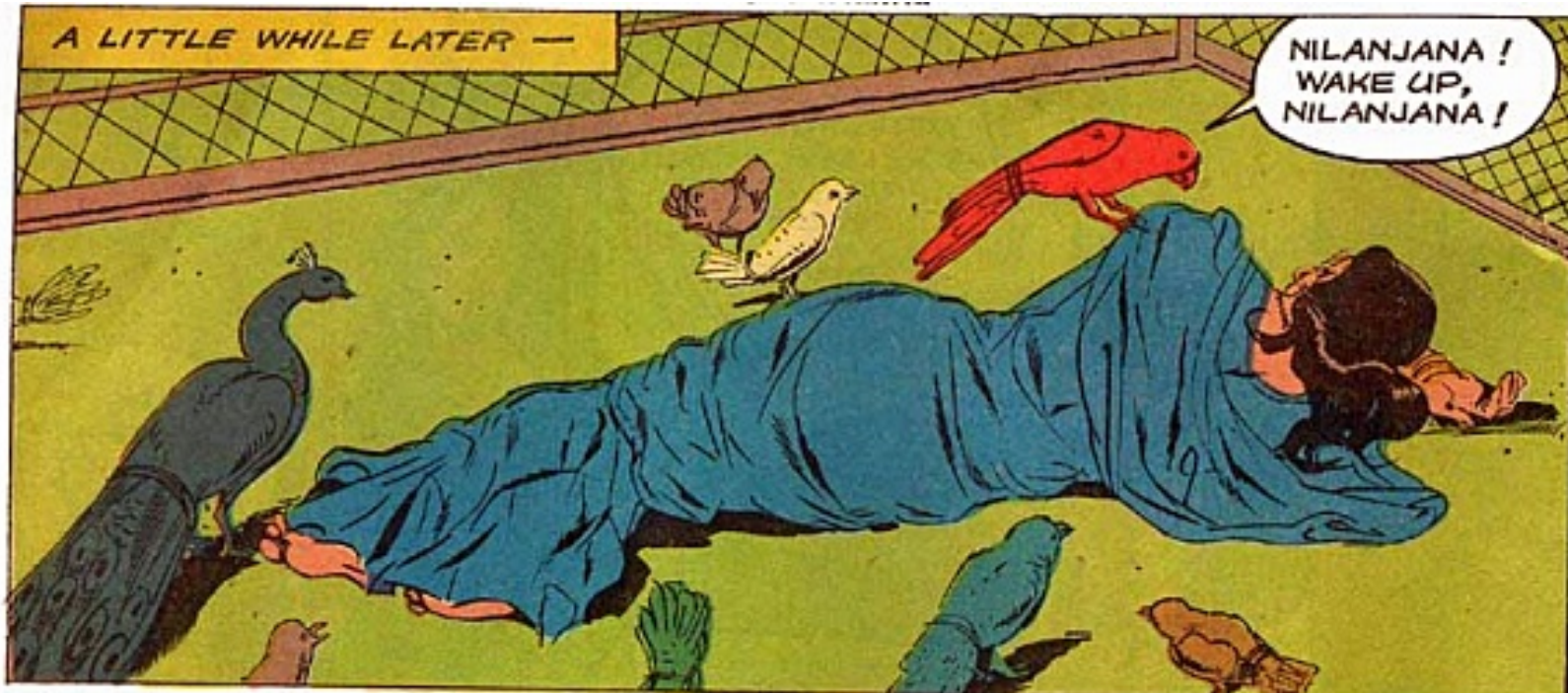
AS NILANJANA WAS
TAKEN AWAY —

I MUST FIND
OUT WHETHER
THE RED PARROT
IS AMONG THE
BIRDS CAUGHT.

THE GUARDS THREW NILANJANA INTO THE CAGE WHERE SHE CRIED HERSELF
TO SLEEP.

A LITTLE WHILE LATER —

NILANJANA !
WAKE UP,
NILANJANA !



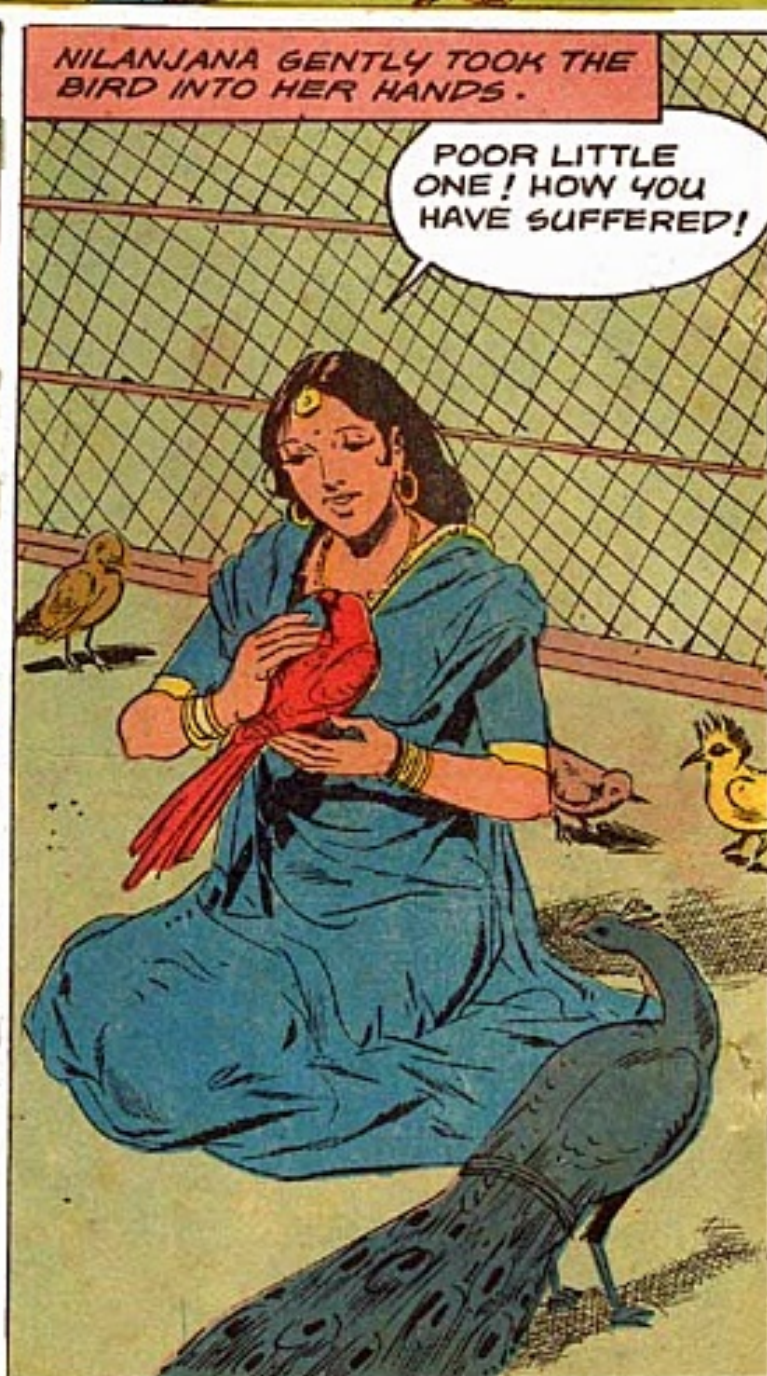
NILANJANA OPENED HER EYES TO
FIND A RED PARROT SPEAKING TO
HER.

SET ME FREE,
NILANJANA. JUST
SEE HOW THE
THREAD HAS
BRUISED MY WINGS.
HOW CRUEL YOU
HUMAN BEINGS
ARE !



NILANJANA GENTLY TOOK THE
BIRD INTO HER HANDS .

POOR LITTLE
ONE ! HOW YOU
HAVE SUFFERED !



I WILL CUT THE
THREAD AND SET
YOU FREE. I
DON'T CARE
WHAT HAPPENS
TO ME.

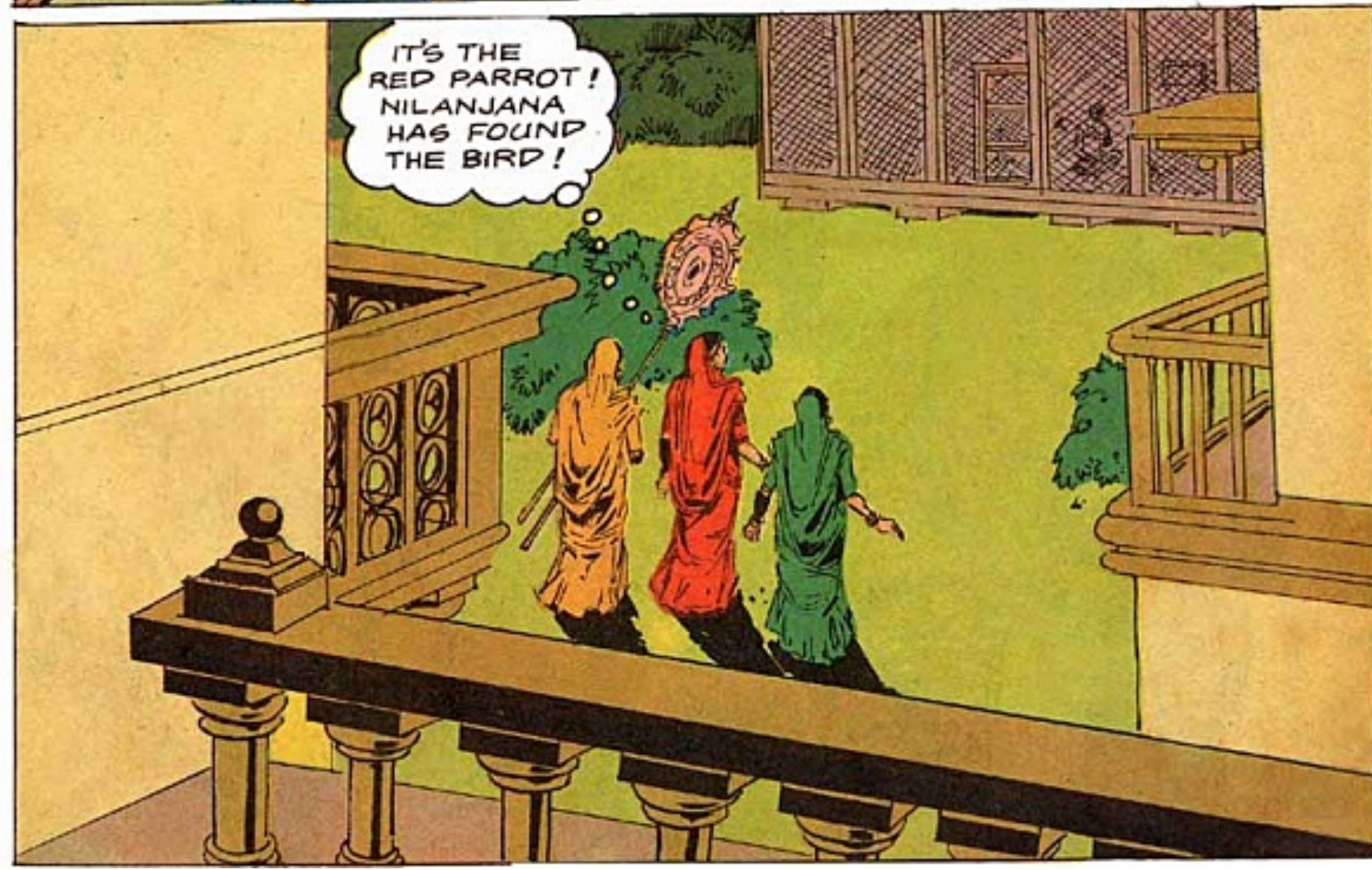


AT THAT MOMENT, RUPANJALI WAS
ON HER WAY TO THE CAGE.

I HOPE THE
RED PARROT
HAS BEEN
CAUGHT.



IT'S THE
RED PARROT!
NILANJANA
HAS FOUND
THE BIRD!





I ONLY SAW
HOW IT SUFFERED.
I KNOW IT WOULD
HAVE DIED IF I
HAD NOT SET IT
FREE.



THE TEARS AND PLEAS OF HER
MAID LEFT RUPANJALI UNMOVED.

YOU
RELEASED
THE PARROT
AND YOU
MUST DIE!



NILANJANA WAS TAKEN
TO THE TOP OF A HILL.
FROM THERE SHE WAS
TO BE THROWN INTO
THE STREAM FAR
BELOW.



THE GUARDS GAVE NILANJANA A
PUSH. BUT EVEN AS SHE FELL,
TWO STRONG ARMS PROTECTED
HER.



THE NEXT MOMENT NILANJANA FOUND HERSELF ON THE HILL AGAIN. A HANDSOME PRINCE WAS STANDING BESIDE HER.

NILANJANA,
I AM THE
RAINBOW
PRINCE.

THE RAINBOW PRINCE !
OUR PRINCESS WILL
BE DELIGHTED . AT
LAST HER PRINCE
HAS COME FOR HER !

AND TORTURING
INNOCENT BIRDS
FOR YOUR SELFISH
ENDS !

RUPANJALI CAME FORWARD.

AH, MY PRINCE!
I HAVE BEEN
WAITING FOR
YOU .

THEN THE PRINCE TOOK OFF HIS GARLAND AND STEPPED FORWARD.

I AM THE RED PARROT!
AND I BELONG TO YOU,
NILANJANA.

NO! SHE IS
ONLY A MAID. I AM
THE PRINCESS YOU
ARE LOOKING FOR....

IGNORING RUPANJALI, THE RAINBOW
PRINCE GARLANDED NILANJANA.

YOU ARE MY
QUEEN. I TOOK
THE FORM OF
THE RED PARROT
ONLY TO TEST
THE WORTH OF
THE GIRL I
WOULD CHOOSE
TO MARRY.

CRUEL RUPANJALI IS
A PRINCESS ONLY BY
BIRTH. BUT YOU, MY
KIND, BRAVE, LOYAL
GIRL, ARE A PRIN-
CESS AT HEART!

YOU GLOW WITH AN
INNER BEAUTY.
RUPANJALI'S
BEAUTY IS ONLY
SKIN-DEEP. COME,
LET US GO TO
THE LAND OF
THE RAINBOW.

BUT THE
BIRDS...
IN THE
CAGE....



I HAVE
ALREADY
SET THEM
FREE.
LOOK!

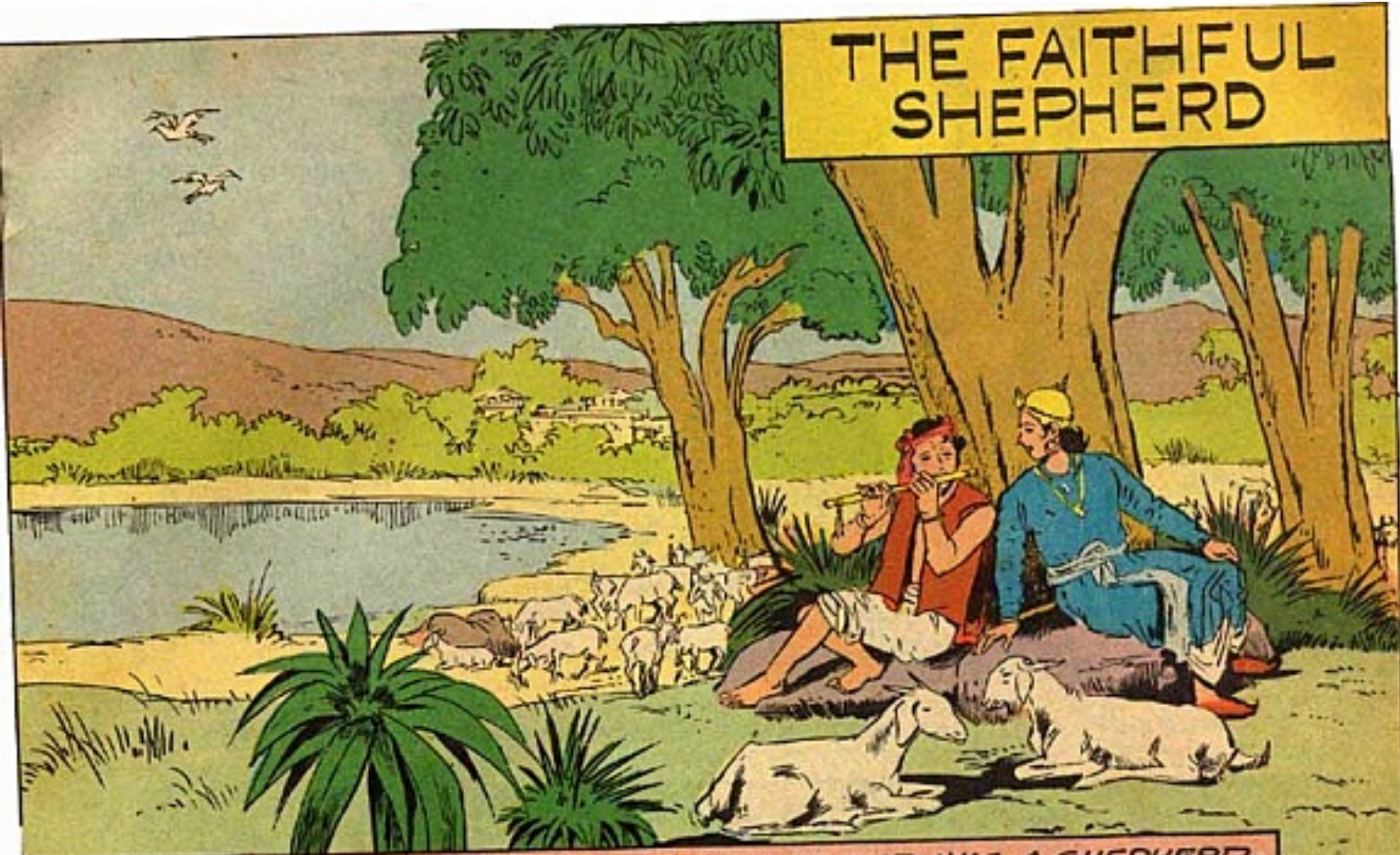
I AM
SO
HAPPY!

THEN THE PRINCE PLACED NILANJANA IN HIS GOLDEN CHARIOT AND SET OFF FOR THE LAND OF THE RAINBOW. RUPANJALI WAS LEFT BEHIND, A Sadder AND Wiser GIRL.

IF ONLY YOU HAD
BEEN A LITTLE MORE CONSI-
DERATE, RUPANJALI. ANY-
WAY, BE KIND AND GENTLE
TO OTHERS IN FUTURE.
THEN YOU ARE SURE TO
FIND PEACE AND
HAPPINESS.



THE FAITHFUL SHEPHERD



THERE ONCE LIVED A PRINCE WHOSE BEST FRIEND WAS A SHEPHERD.

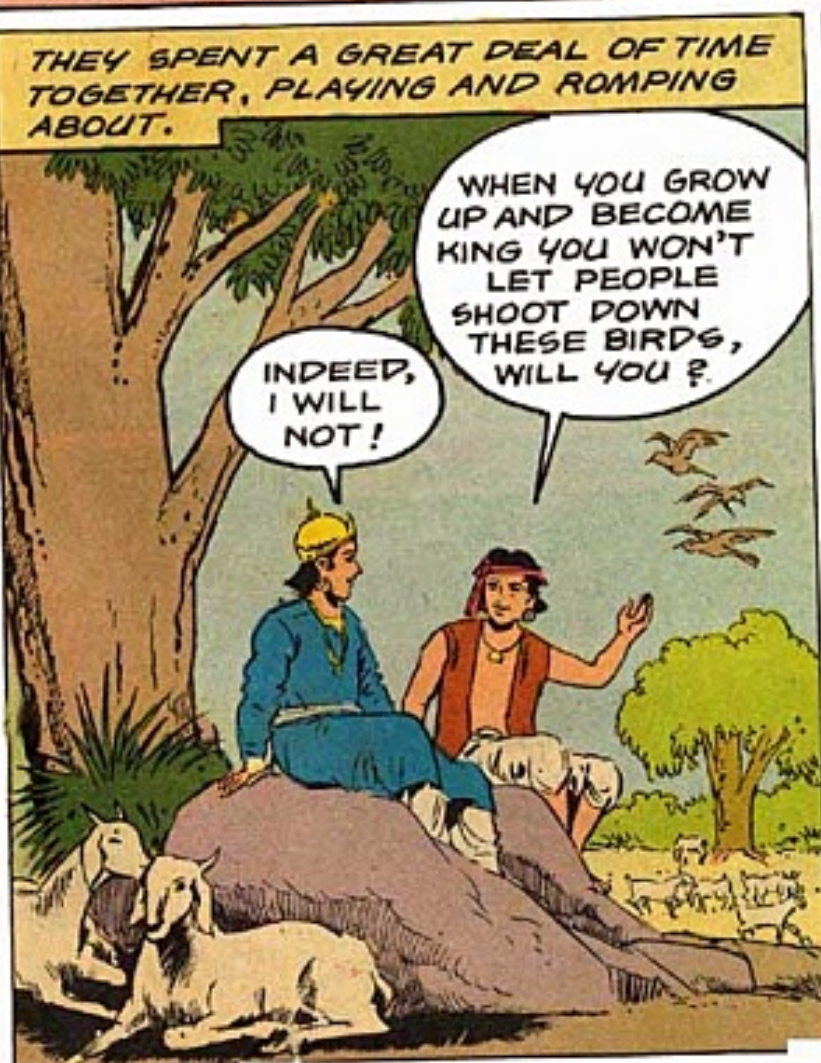
THEY SPENT A GREAT DEAL OF TIME TOGETHER, PLAYING AND ROMPING ABOUT.

WHEN YOU GROW UP AND BECOME KING YOU WON'T LET PEOPLE SHOOT DOWN THESE BIRDS, WILL YOU?

INDEED, I WILL NOT!

AND YOU WILL NOT FORGET ME?

HOW CAN I? YOU ARE MY BEST FRIEND. I WILL MAKE YOU MY MINISTER.



ONE DAY —

FRIEND, I
HAVE TO GO
AWAY TO THE
GURUKULA*
FOR MY STUDIES
AND TRAINING.

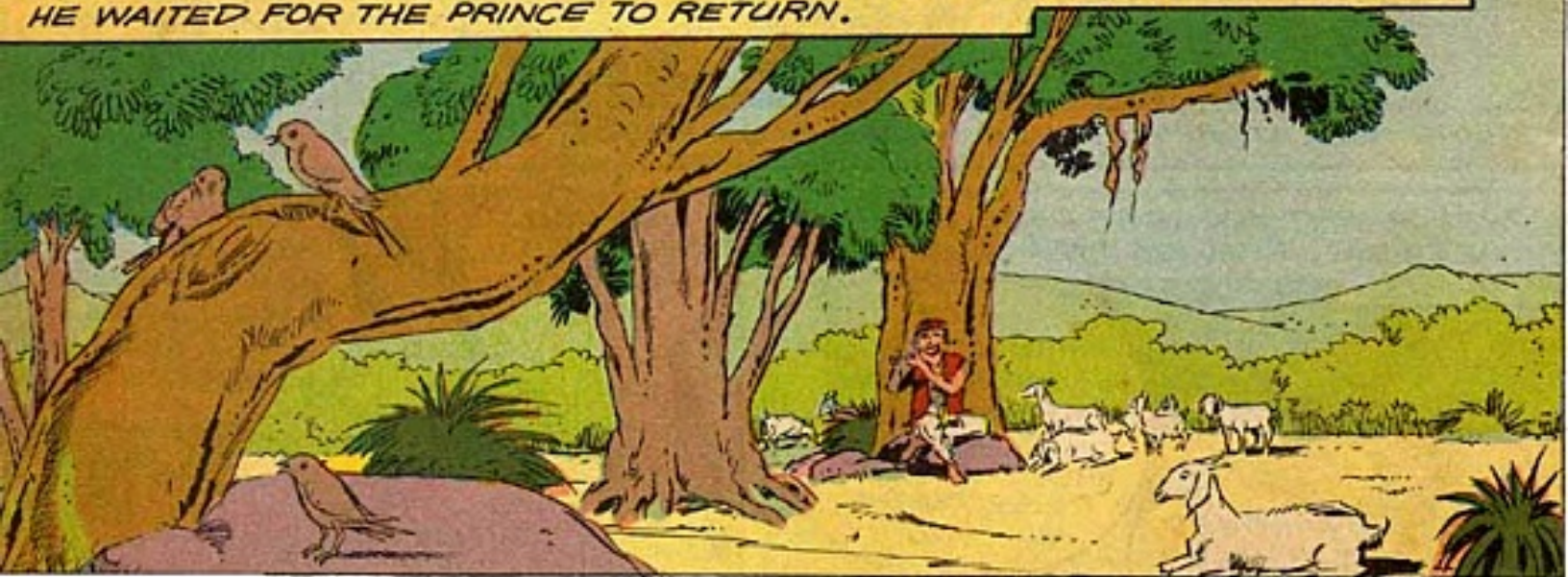


THE TWO FRIENDS BADE
EACH OTHER FAREWELL.

COME BACK SOON,
FRIEND. THE BROOK,
THE HILL, THE BIRDS
AND I WILL BE
WAITING.



THE YEARS FLEW BY. THE SHEPHERD NEVER MADE ANOTHER FRIEND.
HE WAITED FOR THE PRINCE TO RETURN.

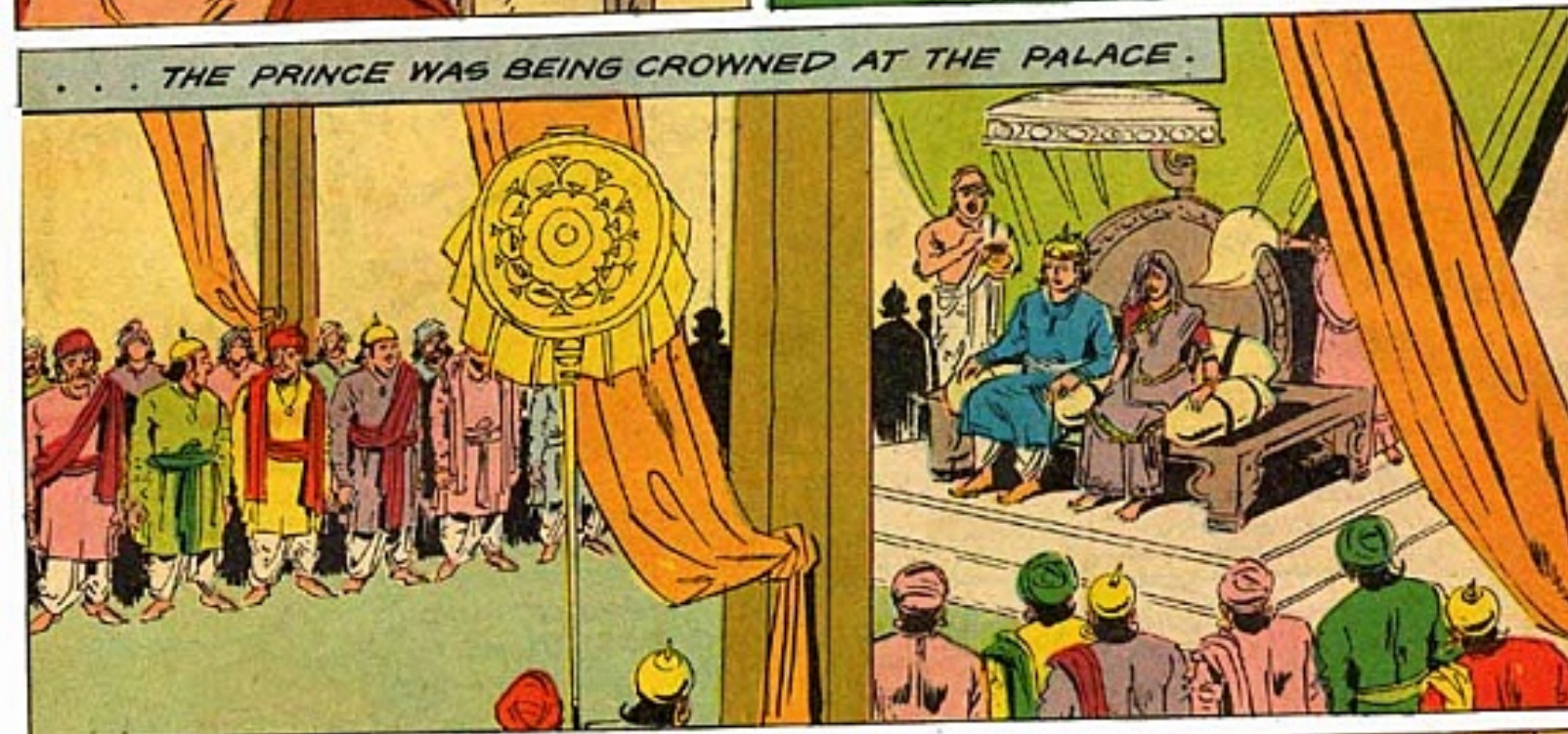


ONE DAY, AS THE SHEPHERD WAS TAKING HIS FLOCK HOME —

DON'T YOU KNOW YOUR
FRIEND HAS RETURNED?
HE IS TO WED
PRINCESS KANAK
MALA TOMORROW.

MY PRINCE HAS
RETURNED! HE WILL
SURELY COME AND
VISIT ME SOON, JUST
AS HE USED TO.





AFTER SOME TIME, THE KING CAME OUT.
THE SHEPHERD QUICKLY STEPPED
FORWARD.

FRIEND!

IT'S THE SHEP-
HERD! HE
WISHES TO TAKE
ADVANTAGE OF
A CHILDHOOD
FRIENDSHIP. I
MUST NOT
ENCOURAGE
HIM.

AND THE KING WALKED PAST THE
SHEPHERD WITHOUT EVEN GLANCING
AT HIM.

MY
FRIEND!
DON'T YOU
REMEMBER
ME?

BUT THE GUARDS HELD
THE SHEPHERD BACK.

QUIET!
DON'T
PESTER
HIS
MAJESTY!

THE SHEPHERD WENT AWAY QUIETLY
WITH TEARS IN HIS EYES.

MY FRIEND HAS
FORGOTTEN ME!

THAT NIGHT THE KING COULD NOT SLEEP. HE WAS TROUBLED BY HIS CONSCIENCE.

IT WAS A PITY I HAD TO SEND HIM AWAY. PERHAPS I SHOULD HAVE TOLD THE GUARDS NOT TO BE HARSH WITH HIM.

BUT HE MANAGED TO JUSTIFY HIMSELF AND QUIETEN HIS CONSCIENCE.

BUT IF HE WERE A GOOD FRIEND HE WOULD HAVE UNDERSTOOD MY PLIGHT. HOW CAN A SHEPHERD ADDRESS A KING AS "FRIEND" IN PUBLIC?

WHEN THE KING WOKE UP THE NEXT MORNING, HE FOUND HIS BODY COVERED WITH MILLIONS AND MILLIONS OF NEEDLES.

AA...AAH...
KANAK MALA!

MY LORD!

I AM IN AGONY
KANAK MALA.
HELP ME!

I WILL PLUCK
OUT THESE
NEEDLES —
EVERY ONE
OF THEM!



BUT SOON SHE REALISED THAT IT
WAS A HOPELESS TASK.

IN THE PLACE
OF EVERY
NEEDLE I
REMOVE,
TWO MORE
APPEAR!



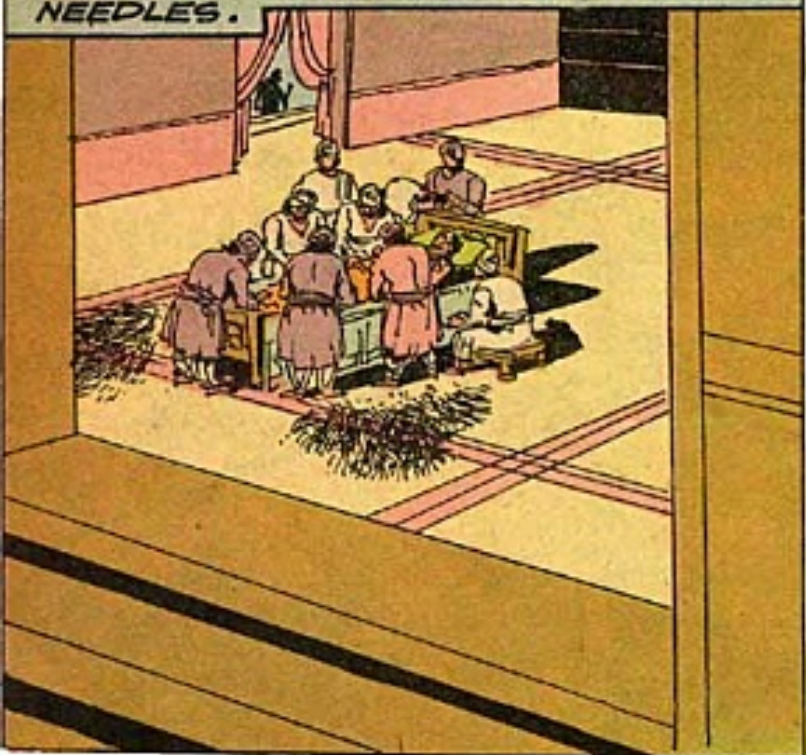
VERY SOON, THE ENTIRE KINGDOM CAME TO KNOW ABOUT THE KING'S PLIGHT.

THE KING'S BODY
IS COVERED WITH
NEEDLES!

HOW CAN
WE HELP
HIM?



PEOPLE CAME IN THEIR HUNDREDS AND
TRIED IN VAIN TO PULL OUT THE
NEEDLES.



IT SEEMED A HOPELESS TASK. BUT
KANAK MALA DID NOT GIVE UP HOPE.

OH, KANAK
MALA, WHAT
SHALL WE DO?
I CAN'T EVEN
SEE!

HAVE
COURAGE, MY
LORD. I WILL
KEEP ON
PULLING OUT
THE
NEEDLES.



NO, YOUR HANDS
MUST BE BATHED IN
BLOOD. PLEASE
TAKE SOME REST
NOW.

I WON'T
LEAVE YOUR
SIDE, MY
LORD.

BUT THE KING INSISTED.

A DIP IN THE
RIVER WILL
REFRESH YOU.
GO, KANAK
MALA.

WHEN SHE REACHED THE RIVER, A YOUNG GIRL APPROACHED HER.

DO YOU NEED
A MAID, FAIR
QUEEN? I HAVE
NO FAMILY AND
NOWHERE TO
GO. I SHALL DO
ALL YOUR
ODD JOBS.

WILL YOU HELP
ME PLUCK OUT
THE NEEDLES
ON THE KING'S
BODY?

YES, I
WILL.

THEN YOU
MAY COME
ALONG WITH ME
AFTER I HAVE
BATHED.

KANAK MALA HAD JUST GONE INTO THE RIVER WHEN SHE HEARD AN ARROGANT VOICE.

BE QUICK, WOMAN! YOU'VE TO GET TO THE PALACE AND DO ALL MY ODD JOBS.



KANAK MALA LOOKED UP AMAZED.

WHAT! HOW DARE YOU! PUT BACK MY CLOTHES AND ORNAMENTS!



THE GIRL ONLY LAUGHED.

I AM THE QUEEN NOW. I HAVE TRICKED YOU CLEVERLY, HAVEN'T I? NO ONE WILL KNOW THAT I AM NOT THE REAL QUEEN! HA, HA, HA!



AS KANAK MALA WAS A BRIDE, SHE USUALLY WORE A VEIL. ONLY THREE PERSONS COULD HAVE RECOGNISED THE OTHER GIRL TO BE AN IMPOSTOR.

BUT THE OLD KING AND THE QUEEN ARE AWAY ON A PILGRIMAGE. MY HUSBAND'S EYES ARE SEWN UP WITH NEEDLES! WHO ELSE CAN EXPOSE HER?



BUT I WILL GO TO THE PALACE AS HER MAID. I MUST BE NEAR MY HUSBAND. HE NEEDS ME.

WHY ARE YOU WASTING TIME? COME OUT OF THE RIVER QUICKLY.





KANAK MALA PRICKED UP HER EARS.

WHO IS
SINGING ABOUT
NEEDLES? HOW
I DREAD THAT
WORD!

IF I HAD A MILLION NEEDLES
I WOULD DANCE AND SING.
IF I HAD A BILLION NEEDLES...

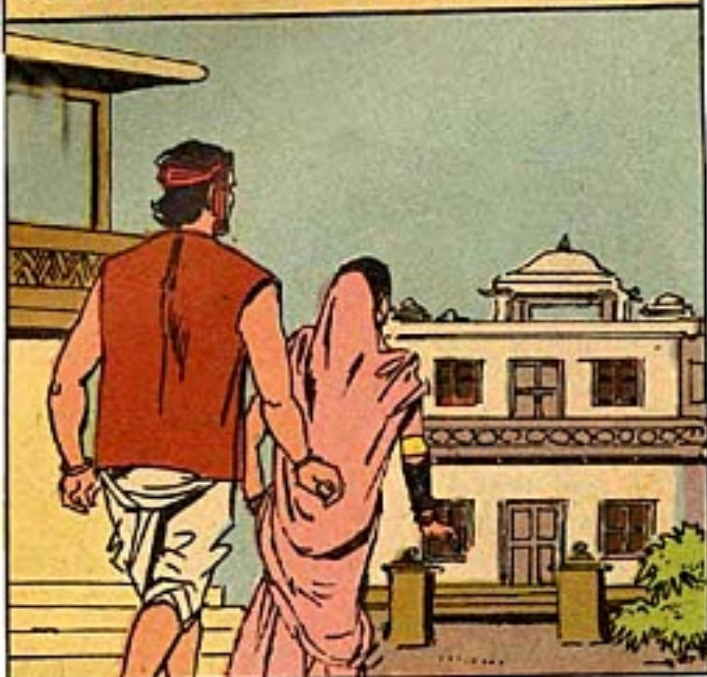
KANAK MALA GOT UP AND LOOKED AROUND FOR THE SINGER.

... I WOULD
BE A KING!

AH!
THERE
HE IS!

DO YOU REALLY
WANT A BILLION
NEEDLES? IF
YOU ARE WILLING
TO PLUCK THEM
OUT YOURSELF,
YOU CAN HAVE
THEM. COME,
FOLLOW ME.

THE SINGER SILENTLY FOLLOWED KANAK MALA TO THE PALACE.



CAN YOU GET IN THROUGH THE WINDOW? THE KING IS LOCKED IN THAT ROOM. HIS BODY IS FULL OF NEEDLES.



THE SINGER BEGAN TO CLIMB A NEARBY TREE...



... AND ENTERED THE KING'S ROOM.



INSIDE THE ROOM, THE SINGER TOOK OUT A THREAD FROM HIS POCKET AND BEGAN TO CHANT.

WICKED NEEDLES, MOVE OFF, DO!

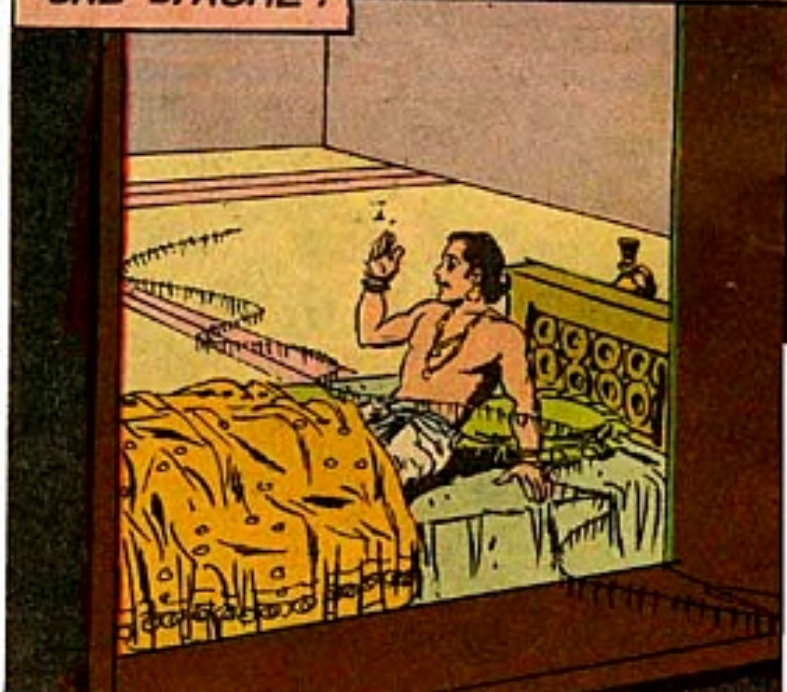




... AND THREADING ITSELF THROUGH THE EYES OF THE NEEDLES . . .



... PULLED THEM ALL OUT AT ONE STROKE .



THE KING EMBRACED THE SINGER, WHO WAS NONE OTHER THAN THE SHEPHERD.

HOW HAPPY
I AM TO SEE
YOU AGAIN!

DO YOU
REMEMBER
ME THEN?

I SHALL NEVER
FORGIVE MYSELF
FOR HAVING
FORGOTTEN
YOU.

TELL ME, WAS
IT YOU WHO
PUNISHED ME
WITH THESE
NEEDLES?

NO, NEVER! I
AM YOUR FRIEND. HOW
COULD I HURT YOU?

IT WAS YOUR
OWN CONSCIENCE
WHICH PUNISHED
YOU. THEN DES-
TINY TOOK A
HAND, TURNING
THE PRICKS OF
YOUR CONSCIENCE
INTO ACTUAL
NEEDLES.

I DESERVED
IT ALL! AND
I AM HAPPY
THAT THE SAME
DESTINY BROUGHT
YOU AGAIN TO
MY RESCUE!

MEANWHILE THE COURTIERs WERE PUZZLED TO FIND THE KING'S DOOR LOCKED.

HOW STRANGE!
LET US BREAK
OPEN THE LOCK
AND FIND OUT
WHAT'S
HAPPENING.

THEY MANAGED TO OPEN THE DOOR
AND ENTER THE ROOM.

WHAT ARE
YOU DOING
HERE?

HEARING THE NOISE, THE IMPOSTOR CAME RUNNING IN —

WHO ARE YOU?
WHERE IS MY
QUEEN? BRING
HER TO ME AT
ONCE!

TREMBLING ALL OVER, THE IMPOSTOR WENT TO FETCH KANAK MALA. THE KING AND THE SHEPHERD FOLLOWED HER.



OH QUEEN!
SAVE ME!
SHOW ME
MERCY.



KANAK MALA!

MY
LORD!

THE WICKED IMPOSTOR WAS BANISHED FROM THE KINGDOM AND THE KING AND QUEEN LIVED HAPPILY EVER AFTER, WITH THE FAITHFUL SHEPHERD TO SERVE THEM.





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